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### **Abstract**

*The objectives of this research were: to improve VIII C students' vocabulary achievement and their active participation in the teaching learning process of vocabulary by using Crossword Puzzles at SMP Negeri 2 Lumajang. The research design used in this research was a Classroom Action Research. The research area was chosen by using purposive method. The subjects of the research were determined by using purposive method. The students of class VIII-C were chosen to be the subjects of this research. The data collection methods of this research were a vocabulary achievement test, observation, documentation, and interview. The collected data were analyzed by using percentage formula. This research was conducted in two Cycles. The results of observations in Cycle 1 revealed that as many as 58.62% of the students were categorized as active students during the teaching learning process of vocabulary and it increased up to 75 % in Cycle 2 in the first meeting. While in the second meeting, the improvement was from 65.62% in Cycle 1 to 90.62% in Cycle 2. Further, the result of vocabulary achievement test indicated that as many as 31 students 96.87% out of 32 students could achieve the target minimum score that was  $\geq 75$  in Cycle 1 and it increased up to 100% (all of the students) in Cycle 2. Based on those result of this research, it was known that the use of crossword puzzle in teaching vocabulary could improve VIII C students' vocabulary achievement and their active participation. Therefore, it's suggested that the English teacher apply Crossword Puzzles in teaching English vocabulary.*

*Key Words: Crossword Puzzles, Vocabulary Achievement, Classroom Action Research*

### **Introduction**

English as an international language is used in countries throughout the world, including Indonesia. In this era of globalization, students of Indonesia should master English because if they know English well, they might have a better chance to get a better opportunity in global competition. The language is not only used for communication but also to transfer information to any fields of study such as education, technology, science, politics, social life and many others. In Indonesia, English is considered as the first foreign language that must be learnt by students beginning from Elementary School up to University level. It can be seen from the 2013 Curriculum for Junior High School that the objectives of teaching English are to develop the communication competency, both in oral and written forms to reach the level of functional literacy; to raise the awareness of the nature and the importance of English to improve national competitiveness in the global community and to develop the students' understanding about the relation between language and culture. In short, the students are considered as Foreign Language English learners (FL learners).

Considering that English is a global language, the students have to master the four skills of English, those are: listening, speaking, reading, writing and the three components namely; vocabulary, pronunciation and grammar. To support those four skills, we need vocabulary which is one of the components which should be acquired

and mastered first of the other language components. One of the keys to succeed in learning a foreign language is by learning its vocabulary.

Vocabulary of a language is just like bricks of a high building. Despite quite small pieces, they are vital to the great structure (Mothe, 2013:377). It means that vocabulary of a language is just like bricks for constructing a building. They are vital for the building a language because language is made up of from words. If we want to use language effectively, we must have good and large stock of vocabulary as we cannot use the language if we do not know the words of that language. Therefore, the students have to enlarge their knowledge with sufficient vocabulary because vocabulary is an important component in learning English as a foreign language.

A preliminary study in the forms of observation and interview had been done at SMP Negeri 2 Lumajang on 16<sup>th</sup> August 2014. The observation revealed why English seemed difficult for the EFL students to understand. First, they seemed bored and less active because of the monotonous teaching learning process. The English teacher only used verbal explanation (lecturing) all the time to teach the English material. She taught vocabulary integrated with reading by giving them a text then asked the students to find the difficult words in the text and then find the meaning of the difficult words in the dictionaries. She added that somehow the students themselves did not have motivation to bring dictionary although they did not know the meanings of some words while learning English

in class. If that situation happened, the teacher asked the students to borrow dictionaries from the school library. Further, based on the interview done with the English teacher, it was revealed that most of the students used Javanese and Indonesian in their daily communication and activities. Almost all Indonesian students use those languages rather than English in their daily communication or activities so that they had difficulties in mastering English well. Furthermore, she said that she never applied teaching media such as crossword puzzles in class to teach vocabulary because crossword puzzles are sometimes found in the students' English text books.

In this case, the researcher proposed crossword puzzles as the instructional teaching media. They are appropriate to be applied in the classroom in order to create a warm climate for success in learning vocabulary to make them interested in learning English vocabulary and avoid monotonous situation. As Karim and Hasbullah (1986:2.36) write:

*"Salah satu bahan pelajaran Bahasa Inggris yang sangat menarik bagi siswa-siswi SMP, terutama pada jam-jam belajar siang adalah Riddles dan Word Puzzles. Dalam bekerja dengan Riddles dan Word Puzzle siswa berada dalam keadaan santai dan bebas dari ketegangan suasana belajar. Karena itu belajar dengan Riddles dan Word Puzzles sangat disenangi siswa"*

From those statements, it can be concluded that one of the interesting media in teaching English is a crossword puzzle. It means that crossword puzzles could be used to sustain the students' interest in learning vocabulary because while searching the answers of the crossword puzzle, unconsciously, the students use their thought vigorously and direct all their imagination without coercion so that they are pleased to do the activity. Therefore, the English teacher may vary the

teaching media to help the students avoid having passive situation and make them understand better about the materials by using crossword puzzles.

A previous study on how the use of crossword puzzles was able to improve students' vocabulary achievement at SMPN 2 Tegalsari Banyuwangi was done by Damai (2011). He reported that the use of crossword puzzles could improve the students' vocabulary achievement from 67.64% to 82.35% by conducting a classroom action research in 2 cycles. The first cycle of his research could not reach the target percentage required but then his research reached the target score required in the second cycle. The similar action research done at SMP Negeri 3 Lumajang by Syafiyah (2013), also found that the use of crossword puzzles could improve the students' vocabulary achievement average score from 52.65% in Cycle 1 to 80.25% in Cycle 2. Based on those results, it could be interpreted that crossword puzzles could improve the students' vocabulary achievement.

Finally, it can be reported that the students of VIII C at SMP Negeri 2 Lumajang had problem in mastering English vocabulary. They had low English mean score compared to

that of the other classes. In this research, the researcher tried to apply crossword puzzles during the teaching leaning of English vocabulary. By using crossword puzzles as teaching media of learning, it was expected that the students were able to improve their active participation during the teaching learning process of vocabulary and improve their vocabulary achievement as well. Therefore, a research entitled "*Improving the VIII C Students' Vocabulary Achievement by Using Crossword Puzzle at SMP Negeri 2 Lumajang*" was undertaken as a way to overcome the problem faced by the students and the English teacher at the school.

### Research Method

Classroom Action Research (CAR) is the design of this research. The aim was to improve VIII C students vocabulary achievement by using crossword puzzles. McMillan (1992:12) states that a classroom action research is a type of applied research in which its purpose is to solve a specific classroom problem or to make decision at single local site. According to Gay *et al.* (2011:507), action research in education is any systematic inquiry conducted by the teachers, principals, school counselors, or other stakeholders in the teaching learning environment that involves gathering information about the ways in which their particular schools operate, the teachers teach, and the students learn. To sum up, a classroom action research is a research which is intended to solve practical problems in teaching learning process.

The area of the research was determined by using purposive method. Fraenkel and Wallen (2012:100) state that a purposive method is a method in choosing a research area based on certain purpose or reason. The area of this research was SMP Negeri 2 Lumajang.

The research subjects of this research were the eighth grade students of SMP Negeri 2 Lumajang, especially the students of class VIII C in the 2014/2015 academic year. Based on the information given by the teacher, this class had the lowest mean score of vocabulary test that was 68.5. In addition, from the observation, it was known that the students were less active in English class. Thus, both of the students' vocabulary achievement and the students' active participation need to be improved.

To collect the data needed (primary data and supporting data), vocabulary test and observation checklist were used to get the primary data, while the supporting data were gathered through interview and documentation.

Data analysis and reflection were needed to do in order to analyze the obtained data and to know about the improvement of students' active participation and students' vocabulary achievement after being taught by using Crossword Puzzles. The data analysis and reflection were discussed in the following part.

#### 1. The Result Observation

The result of observation about the students' active participation was analysed by using the following formula.

$$E = n/N \times 100\%$$

Notes:

E = the percentage of students who are active in the teaching learning process of vocabulary by using Crossword Puzzles

n = the number of the students who are categorized as active students

N = the total number of the students

(Ali, 1993:186)

## 2. The Result of Vocabulary Test

Meanwhile, the researcher applied the following formula in calculating the percentage of the students who got score  $\geq 75$  in the vocabulary achievement test:

$$E = n/N \times 100\%$$

Notes:

E = the percentage of students who gained score  $\geq 75$  in vocabulary test

n = the number of the students who got score  $\geq 75$  in vocabulary test

N = the total number of the students

(Ali, 1993:186)

## Research Results

### Cycle 1

The implementations of the actions in Cycle 1 were done in three meetings. The first meeting was done on November 20<sup>th</sup>, 2014 and the second meeting was conducted on November 25<sup>th</sup>, 2014. For the vocabulary test, it was administered on November 27<sup>th</sup>, 2014. The first meeting of Cycle 1 was done by implementing the activities in Lesson Plan 1 while the second meeting of Cycle 1 was conducted based on Lesson Plan 2 and the the third meeting was used to administer the vocabulary test. The researcher conducted the research collaboratively with the English teacher. In the first meeting the researcher as the teacher, and the English teacher as the observer. While in the second meeting, the English teacher as the teacher and researcher as the observer.

The result of observation in the first meeting in Cycle 1 showed that there were 17 students who were categorized as active students and 12 students were categorized as passive students. Meanwhile, the result of observation in the second meeting in Cycle 1 indicated that as many as 21 students were categorized as active students while to other 11 students were categorized as passive ones. On the average, the percentage result of observations of the students' active participation was only 62.12%. It means that the students' active participation in Cycle 1 was still under the target percentage required in this research. In other words, the students' active participation in the teaching learning process of vocabulary by using crossword puzzle in Cycle 1 did not achieve the target percentage required yet.

In contrast, the result of vocabulary achievement test in Cycle 1 indicated that 31 students (96.87%) out of 32 students achieved the standard minimum score that was  $\geq 75$ . The results achieved the research criteria.

Further, the result of vocabulary achievement test in Cycle 1 indicated that only as many as 29 students (78.38%) out of 37 students achieved the standard

minimum score that was  $\geq 75$ . The results achieved the research criteria

### Cycle 2

This cycle was conducted to know the consistency of the success achieved in Cycle 1. The actions in Cycle 2 were also carried out in three meetings. The first meeting was conducted on February 12<sup>th</sup>, 2015, the second meeting was conducted on February 27<sup>th</sup>, 2015 while vocabulary test of Cycle 2 was conducted on February 19<sup>th</sup>, 2015. The steps of the activities in Cycle 2 were the same as the ones in Cycle 1. In the first meeting, the researcher as the teacher, and the English teacher as the observer. While in the second meeting, the English teacher as the teacher and researcher as the observer.

The result of observation in the first meeting in Cycle 2 showed that there were 24 students (75%) who were categorized as active students and 8 students (25%) were categorized as passive students. Meanwhile, the result of observation in the second meeting in Cycle 2 indicated that as many as 29 students (90.62%) were categorized as active students while the other 3 students (9.37%) were categorized as passives. On the average, the percentage result of observations of the students' active participation was 82.81%. It means that the targeted percentage of the students' active participation has been achieved.

Further, the result of vocabulary achievement test in Cycle 2 indicated that all of the students or 32 students (100%) achieved the standard minimum score that was  $\geq 75$ . It means that the target of the students' vocabulary score requirement in this research was achieved. The analysis showed the consistency of the result of the use Crossword Puzzles which could improve students' active participation and their vocabulary achievement. So, it could be concluded that teaching English vocabulary by using Crossword Puzzles could improve students' active participation and their vocabulary achievement at SMPN 2 Lumajang, especially at VIII C class.

## Discussion

This research was conducted in two Cycles and each Cycle consisted of three meetings. Two meetings were used for the teaching learning process of vocabulary by using Crossword Puzzles and one meeting was used for vocabulary achievement test. The researcher conducted the research collaboratively with the English teacher.

Based on the results of classroom observation and the vocabulary test in Cycle 1 and Cycle 2, it can be seen that the students improved their active participation in the teaching and learning process and in vocabulary achievement after being taught by using Crossword Puzzles. Although the objectives of this research in Cycle 1 were reached, the actions were still continued to the second cycle in order to know the consistency of result in Cycle 1.

The result of vocabulary test in Cycle 1 presented showed that 96.87 % of the students reached the target of the research. In other words, the action given to the students in Cycle 1 was successful. The success criterion of the research was at least 75% of the students reached score

75. Then, Cycle 2 was given to know the consistency of the result achieved in Cycle

The result of vocabulary test in Cycle 2 showed that 100 % of the students reached score at least 75. It means that Cycle 2 also improved the students' vocabulary achievement. It showed the consistency result in both cycles. Further, based on the observation checklist, it could be seen that the average participation of the students increased from 61.12% in Cycle 1 to 82.81% in Cycle 2.

The students actively participated during the teaching learning process of vocabulary by using crossword puzzles because they were relaxed and free from stress to learn English vocabulary. Further, they were enthusiastic while completing the crossword puzzles. This result is in line with theory from two experts, Karim and Hasbullah (1986:2.34) saying that one of the advantages of using crossword puzzles in the classroom is crossword puzzles can make the students relaxed and free from stress to learn English as a foreign language.

Further, the successful results of the students' vocabulary achievement in each cycle was related to theory saying that one of the advantages of using crossword puzzles in the classroom is that crossword puzzles could increase the students' vocabulary (Spivey and Loraine, 2010:1). The students find new vocabulary from the clues or the answers of crossword puzzles and get more vocabularies by doing crossword puzzles in every meeting in each cycle. Therefore, the students could get successful results in the vocabulary achievement tests.

The result of this research was in line with some previous researches; one of them was conducted by Damai (2011) who reported that teaching vocabulary by using crossword puzzles could improve the vocabulary achievement of the eighth year students of SMPN 2 Tegalsari, Banyuwangi. Another research was conducted by Syafiyah (2013). She found that the use of crossword puzzles in teaching vocabulary could improve the vocabulary achievement of the first year students of SMP Negeri 3 Lumajang. The researcher used those two previous researches as references, but there was a difference between this research and the previous researches. Those two researches used both kinds of crossword puzzles in the forms of pictures and crossword puzzles in the forms of words or phrases as the clues while this research only used crossword puzzles in the forms of words or phrases as the clues since the pictures of adjective and adverb were difficult to be drawn as the clues.

In conclusion, the use of crossword puzzles is considered as effective teaching media to improve the students' vocabulary. It is based on the result of this research showing that teaching vocabulary by using crossword puzzles could improve the eighth grade students' vocabulary achievement and their active participation at SMP Negeri 2 Lumajang in the 2014/2015 academic year.

### Conclusions and Suggestions

Based on the data analysis and discussion above, the following points can be concluded:

- (1) The use of crossword puzzles could improve the VIII C students' active participation in the teaching learning process of vocabulary at SMP Negeri 2 Lumajang.
- (2) The use of crossword puzzles could improve the VIII C students' vocabulary achievement at SMP Negeri 2 Lumajang

By considering the results of the implementation of Crossword Puzzles in teaching vocabulary that could improve the students' active participation and their vocabulary achievement, some suggestions are proposed to the following people.

#### 1. The English Teacher

It is suggested that the English teacher apply crossword puzzles in teaching vocabulary. It is due to the fact that crossword puzzles can improve the students' vocabulary achievement and the students' active participation.

#### 2. The Students

The students are suggested to increase their vocabulary by using crossword puzzles since they can help the students to enlarge their vocabulary.

#### 3. The Future Researcher

Future researchers are suggested to use these research results as information and input to conduct a research with similar topic by using different research design, such as an experimental design to know the significant effect of using crossword puzzles on students' vocabulary achievement or in using the same research design with different language component to improve the students' speaking skill achievement by using crossword puzzles.

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